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SUBJECT: POLISH FORMIN OUTLINES EVOLVING RELATIONS WITH U.S.

11. (SBU) SUMMARY. In recent remarks to the media, FM Sikorski suggested that Poland is a regional partner of the U.S., but only the EU has the scale and resources to be America's strategic partner. Sikorski argued that Poland should support deeper EU integration, Lisbon Treaty ratification, and appointment of a common EU foreign minister if Warsaw hoped to have substantial influence with Washington, via the EU. On missile defense (MD), he appealed for patience in waiting for the U.S. administration's decision on whether or not to deploy MD components in Poland. On other issues, Sikorski welcomed the EU's increased attention to Afghanistan and spoke of the need for more international troops, but signaled that Poland was not currently considering an increase in its own contingent. The Minister spoke positively of Russian PM Putin's visit to Poland last week; rejected accusations that the GOP was improving relations with Moscow at the expense of Ukraine; and praised the recent warming of Polish-Belarusian relations. Sikorski's appeal for realistic appraisals of the relationship with the U.S. may help to temper Poles' expectations. END SUMMARY.

MAXIMIZING INFLUENCE WITH U.S. THROUGH AN INTEGRATED EUROPE

12. (U) In Sikorski's September 8 Polish Public TV interview and a September 10 interview in Polska, he publicly argued that only the EU as a whole can be a "strategic" or "equal" partner for the U.S. In response to a question about negative reactions to the level of U.S. representation at last week's commemoration of the outbreak of World War II, Sikorski justified the U.S. decision to send National Security Advisor Jones, "the Number Three power person within the U.S. administration." He added that Jones had brought with him "a favorable and strong message" from President Obama. Sikorski then emphasized that Poles should view relations with the U.S. realistically and avoid taking extreme positions, such as putting too much faith in America or demanding troop withdrawals from Afghanistan. Those who want to be a strategic partner of the U.S. should favor European integration, including a common foreign minister and Lisbon Treaty ratification, he argued. In the meantime, Poland could only aspire to be a regional partner for the U.S.

13. (U) Commenting on the recent letter from former Central and Eastern European leaders to President Obama, Sikorski said the authors' aim was to remind Washington that it should also talk to its allies while fostering dialogue with Moscow. According to Sikorski, Washington is doing so, since Poland was the only ally that the U.S. had briefed following President Obama's visit to Moscow.

MD DECISION COULD BE SURPRISE

14. (U) On Missile Defense, Sikorski appealed for continued patience, and stated enigmatically that upcoming decisions by the U.S. on deployment options might surprise both critics and proponents of the system. He noted that the U.S. perception of the

threat from Iran had evolved: the Obama Administration was leaning toward the conclusion that the most serious threat came from medium-range, and not inter-continental, missiles. This, in his view, will have impact on "the timetable for constructing elements of NATO's security architecture."

#### AFGHANISTAN - AN EU PRIORITY

15. (U) Sikorski stressed the need to reverse negative trends in Afghanistan so that the international forces could eventually withdraw, "leaving power to the Afghan authorities." He expressed satisfaction that Afghanistan was now perceived as an EU priority under Sweden's presidency and that the EU was planning to convene a pro-development conference in Kabul. He also described as "sensible" the U.S. approach to send additional troops for a year or two to improve the security situation. Sikorski stressed, however, that the GoP was not considering a troop increase for its contingent in Ghazni Province.

#### DIALOGUE WITH MOSCOW AND MINSK RIGHT STRATEGY

16. (U) Commenting on Polish-Russian relations in light of the September 1 commemoration of the outbreak of World War II, Sikorski observed that the event was successful because Putin "saw and heard that Europe respects Poland's role in WWII." He spoke positively of Putin's visit, appreciating the fact that the Russian PM spoke of the immorality of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact and expressed regret for the massacre of Polish officers at Katyn. The bilateral agreements concluded during the visit proved that Poland's engagement policy with Moscow was on track. Similarly, Sikorski pointed to Poland's developing relations with Belarus, stressing that Minsk was emerging from "self-isolation" and seeking to find a balance between West and East.

#### UKRAINE'S TRUE FRIEND

17. (U) Sikorski rejected criticism from the Polish opposition that the GoP was improving relations with Moscow at the expense of Warsaw's ties with Ukraine. He highlighted the adoption of the small border traffic law, the Eastern Partnership, and his recent joint mission to Kyiv with German FM Steinmeier as proof of Poland's strong support for Ukraine. Sikorski argued that Poland should not just praise Ukraine, but should also be a "true friend" and suggest how Kyiv could further integration with the EU.

#### COMMENT

18. (SBU) As the GoP's foremost expert on relations with the U.S., Sikorski has been under intense pressure to deliver the goods: access to top U.S. officials, and U.S. responsiveness to Polish concerns and requests. His latest public comments serve as a welcome appeal for more modest and "realistic" Polish expectations. Sikorski's public comments build on what MFA colleagues have long told us privately - that they understand the new U.S. administration will not depend as heavily on Polish support in Iraq or on Missile Defense.

19. (SBU) Sikorski's argument that Poland can best influence the U.S. through the EU reaffirms the key GoP goals of maximizing Polish influence within the EU and the EU's influence around the world. The Foreign Minister, for example, has made it clear in previous public comments that he intends to highlight the Union's common European Security and Defense Policy during Poland's EU Presidency in 2011. Under a "realist" foreign and security policy, Poland might no longer command as much U.S. attention, but neither is the relationship with the U.S. the only mechanism for Poland to ensure its security. ASHE